

## Rep. Brad Miller Introduces SLUM Assistance Act to Reduce Global Poverty and Promote U.S. National Security Interests

[Washington, D.C.] - **Rep. Brad Miller (D-NC), a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee,** introduced today *the Shelter, Land, and Urban Management (SLUM) Assistance Act of 2009* to raise awareness of the importance of rapid urbanization and slum conditions in the developing world which can pose a threat to the security and stability of developing countries, and thus to the United States.

**Rep. David Price (NC-4)**, joined by other Members of Congress, also signed onto this bipartisan legislation as an original cosponsor.

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**Miller and Price** were inspired to pursue this issue by separate congressional delegation visits to the Kibera slum outside of Nairobi, Kenya. The largest slum in Africa, Kibera, is the focus of notable charitable efforts such as *Carolina for Kibera*, organized by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. *The SLUM Assistance Act* would expand on efforts like this with a level of support most non-governmental organizations cannot sustain.

"The United States was once the international leader in promoting policies and investments that improved the lives of millions of slum dwellers," said **Rep. Miller**. "If we are to promote our national security interests and drastically reduce global poverty, we must renew abandoned efforts to help with shelter and affordable housing."

One billion people, a sixth of the world's population, live in slums. That number is expected to double in the next 30 years. Many slums around the world have become incubators for the most significant global challenges including extremism, pandemic diseases, environmental degradation, and poverty.

People living in slums face abysmal conditions. Housing is often dilapidated and overcrowded; access to water and sanitation services is inadequate; and forced evictions leave people more vulnerable to poverty, violence, and abuse. Slum dwellers are the backbone of the urban labor force, but the poverty and human degradation of life in slums leaves millions of people around the world at risk of disease, starvation, violence, exploitation and death.

"Over the last several years, the U.S. and other developing countries have invested billions of dollars into critical priorities like fighting HIV/AIDS, hunger, and poverty," **Rep. Price** said. "These important battles, as well as our efforts to curtail violent extremism, will not be won unless we urgently turn our focus to global slums, where these problems have grown their deepest roots."

In 2002, the latest year for which data are available for this issue, USAID's obligations for urban development for the poor represented just 8 percent of that year's total obligations. The *SLUM Assistance Act* would make addressing the challenges of slums a higher priority in U.S. foreign aid programs. The Act authorizes increased assistance for programs to expand access to tenure security,

basic shelter, and urban services and infrastructure. The legislation would also streamline and enhance current U.S. programs tasked with shelter related mandates by calling for an increase in their manpower and diversity of expertise. Appropriators must still decide the amount of funding needed.

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